

**North Carolina Board of Transportation
Environmental Planning and Policy Committee
Meeting Minutes for August 8, 2012**

A meeting of the Environmental Planning and Policy Committee (EPPC) was held August 8, 2012 at 1:00 PM in the EIC Room of the Transportation Building. Nina Szlosberg-Landis chaired the meeting. Other Board of Transportation members that attended were:

David L. Burns	Chuck Watts
Wanda Proffitt	

Other attendees included:

Rob Bencini	Jim Humphrey	Angela Person
Jay Bennett	Julie Hunkins	Amy Simes
Lauren Blackburn	Berry Jenkins	Dan Thomas
Brad Ellington	Daniel Keel	Don Voelker
Steve Gurganus	Leigh Lane	

Ms. Nina Szlosberg-Landis called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM and accepted a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the July committee meeting. The minutes were approved as presented.

Ms. Nina Szlosberg-Landis noted that the presentation pertaining to the health policy is a continuation of past meetings. She introduced Ms. Julie Hunkins who would explain the draft policy and lead the discussion for the meeting.

Ms. Hunkins started by explaining where they had been and recapped the information presented at the last meeting. At the last EPPC meeting, the Committee was asked what they would like to have included in the policy. Four primary items were indicated. The first is a needs statement in terms of why the department should be looking at including public health in what we do. The second is a vision and what we are trying to achieve. The third element includes specific goals. The fourth is “active transportation”, which is about the opportunity to provide transportation options that involve physical activity. There were also comments to provide a statement about implementation and the department’s commitment to considering health in what we do.

Ms. Hunkins took the information and guidance from the previous EPPC meeting, along with the research that was done, and drafted a policy. Internal and external stakeholders were contacted and their feedback and comments were considered and incorporated into the draft policy. A formatted handout was presented at the EPPC meeting for discussion and further feedback. The highlighted items were especially important to reflect on because they pertained to the comments received or issues that are important for the committee to discuss.

Ms. Hunkins stated that in terms of input, the policy was sent out to all the modal divisions, the Division of Highways, Roadway Design, Project Development, Preconstruction and Mobility and Safety. They also had a strategy for working specifically with the Divisions and getting their input. They talked with the Transportation Planning Branch and Susan Coward. The

Governance Office received a copy of the drafted policy for comment. Initial comments were also received from the Technical Services Division and Facility Management. They also talked with the Federal Highway Administration and external stakeholders and key state agencies, such as Active Living by Design and the NC Departments of Environment and Natural Resources, Health and Human Services – Division of Public Health, and Commerce. They also cross-walked it with MASS-DOT, which is the only DOT currently that has a Health and Transportation Policy, which was legislatively mandated. Input has been received from about half of the groups contacted; input provided was used to help to shape the current draft policy for discussion. Ms. Hunkins state that the draft policy was posted to the EPPC's website.

Ms. Hunkins suggested that they go through the policy using the four different arrows on the right side of the policy to discuss concerns and reflect on comments and other items highlighted. She also noted that the draft policy was formatted to include line numbers for easy reference and to facilitate discussion.

At the end of the discussion, Ms. Hunkins stated that she would check to see if what was envisioned for a healthy transportation policy was captured, if there is anything else the committee would like to include, and if their efforts need to be refocused in some areas. The outcome ideally would be for the EPPC to feel comfortable enough with the policy to recommend that the Board.

Ms. Hunkins and the Committee proceeded with the items on the drafted policy after taking a few minutes to review. The first item to be discussed on the policy was the Title. Initially it was called the Active Transportation Policy. It was brought to their attention that when talking about public health, it is more than just physical activity. It didn't include the term exposure or safety. Upon thinking of a more holistic approach to public health, the recommendation was to call the policy the Health and Transportation Policy.

Mr. Watts commented that he agreed with the name Health and Transportation Policy and that it could become a name that stands for exactly how it is worded based on what is supported behind it. He commented that when looking at the fact of it, a better representation would be the Transportation-Public Health Policy.

Ms. Szlosberg-Landis suggested that the name be the Health Impact Transportation Policy. Mr. Watts commented that when talking about "impact", its just one of the things talked about but not the only thing. He thinks "public health" is more in line with what is being dicussed and all phases of "public heath" and how our transportation system impacts that.

Ms. Szlosberg-Landis commented that the title needed to somehow talk to the impact of transportation on public health. Mr. Watts agreed with Ms. Szlosberg-Landis' comment.

Ms. Leigh Lane, with the Center for Transportation and the Environment at NC State University who has been supporting the development of the draft health policy through research, suggested that they not add the word "impact" in the title. She thinks that in the national arena there is a lot of influence on health impact assessments, and it might send the wrong message to stakeholders. The word "impact" has such a legally significant meaning within much of what we do. She encouraged the committee to stay away from that word.

Ms. Hunkins continued the discussion around the need statement section of the policy and how it sets the stage for why it is important for DOT to be thinking about public health. She suggested a revision to the name of the policy, which was based on the subsequent discussion.

Ms. Hunkins discussed the next item dealing with word “exposure”. Out of all the issues she discussed with staff and stakeholders, they were really sensitized to the word “exposure”. She thinks the reason is multi-faceted. When people think about exposure, they immediately think of air quality and pollutants. Because the word could also be interpreted so broadly, the word “exposure” didn’t seem to fit; “exposure” seemed to bring up the idea of both positive and negative consequences. Some people suggest that “exposure” and the possibility of walking on sidewalks and riding bikes is exposure to having infrastructure around them, which can be positive. There were discussions about it being litigious because there are certain rules and regulations around air quality, pollutants and exposures. The way all this was now addressed in the policy now before the EPPC was that they took out the word “exposure” and substituted other language that describes it. She added something may exist in the environment, but people also have choices and behaviors to get close to or engage in behaviors or activities that may increase the risk and, therefore, have bad health outcomes.

Mr. Bennett asked, “When connecting what’s happening inside and outside of the right-of-way, does it have a place in the policy or handled outside of the policy with other initiatives?”

Mr. Watts asked Mr. Bennett to be more specific with his question, because there was a micro and macro perspective on “areas”. Referring to the connections between land use, transportation and public health, Mr. Bennett reiterated that it was important to come to a meeting of the minds to figure out what they are trying to accomplish locally, with changes to current needs and figuring out how it will react or counteract together, including all those things that separate the left and right sides of the street.

Ms. Hunkins asked the Committee if this would come up more specifically when they would discuss the goal around physical activity -- in terms of getting activity centers closer together or land use that supports walking and biking and these become viable transportation options for some people?

Ms. Lauren Blackburn, Director for NCDOT’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Division, commented that there is only an opportunity when the anticipation requirements are meld together.

Ms. Szlosberg-Landis suggested adding a statement around line 16 of the policy, that would talk about the connections between the built environment and activity level and well-being of the public, recognizing that there is a partnership between land use and infrastructure and the responsibilities of local government and state government to work together to achieve the goals.

Ms. Lane added that perhaps a statement that reflects on the built environment may be more appropriate in recognizing that transportation infrastructure is part of the built environment.

Ms. Hunkins asked if such a statement might reflect a partnership between local and state government for coordinated land use and transportation planning.

Ms. Szlosberg-Landis asked that if the word “land use” could be added around lines 14 and 18.

Mr. Dan Thomas commented that in the 2040 Plan, there is an initiative that is about better integrating transportation and land- use.

A conversation about changing the term “aspects” in line 12 to “attributes”. Mr. Watts commented that he was concerned about the language of “certain aspects” in the policy and agreed with the change that Mr. Gurganus.

Ms. Szlosberg-Landis suggested that it should read “attributes of and risks inherent to” on line 12 of the policy.

Ms. Hunkins commented that there was one other place where “exposure” did show up in the policy. On the second page, third bullet of the policy, the word exposure was eliminated from the policy. It was replaced with “minimizing the potential for the transportation system to undesirably affect human health”.

Ms. Hunkins commented that on lines 19 through 21 of the policy, there was a suggestion to add a statement around how the public health, in general, due to inactivity of North Carolinians is decreasing. As a result there are increased health care costs. Through their review of the draft policy, Ms. Hunkins noted that the NC Division of Public Health was generally supportive of adding language about the decrease in overall health status and associated increased health care costs.

Ms. Hunkins provided some background about North Carolina health care statistics, and more specifically, those around chronic diseases. A suggestion was made that this be reflected in the policy. Ms. Hunkins asked if the committee was in agreement with stating in the policy that North Carolina is having a decrease in overall health outcomes. She asked if the statement reflects some of the national conversation going on around healthcare and healthcare costs.

Ms. Szlosberg-Landis commented that in dealing with public health, it is all state and taxpayers money and the whole idea that DOT decisions can't be viewed in a bundle doesn't make sense. We can help save the state money if the money is spent differently. Talking about it is not going to make the problem go away. Sometimes you have to address the problem.

Ms. Hunkins stated that in the last 15 years, there has been a 10% increase in obesity and overweight among adults. NC ranks 36 in diabetes and 31 for cardiovascular health. We are ranked 31 for certain kinds of cancer related to inactivity. We are currently ranked 32 in 2011 in overall ranking of health among other states.

Ms. Szlosberg-Landis recommended keeping that statement, because it came from someone from Public Health and they were comfortable with it being in the policy.

Ms. Hunkins stated that there was nothing about the economic implications of an unhealthy workforce in terms of the state's economy and our global competitiveness. A suggestion was made to include a statement in that regard. In addition, another reviewed suggested that in realization of our State's growing population, the demographics are changing and, as they change, there are certain health disparities or health related issues for certain populations; in addition, mobility needs may change as we serve different demographics. In support of some of

the information in the 2040 Plan and a need for the Department to respond to changing demographics in North Carolina, we have added the statement about being responsive to our changing states needs and the individuals in it. Providing the options for mobility and transportation can affect the quality of life, including the health aspects.

Ms. Szlosberg-Landis asked, “Should the statement read, ‘the needs and preferences of all its customers’?”

Ms. Hunkins asked, “Do they think the quality of life is about communities, individuals in communities or individuals and communities?”

Ms. Szlosberg-Landis answered that it should read individuals and communities across the state.

Ms. Hunkins moved on to looking at the vision section of the policy that says that DOT is going to look at healthy implications in their decision making that will cross all the modes and all the different kinds of things that DOT does. No modification was suggested.

Ms. Hunkins moved to the goals section of the policy that talked about physical activity and how to provide opportunities for increased physical activity, increase safety and minimize exposure. In line 35 through 37 of the policy (the physical activity goal), they felt a need to emphasize multimodal transportation, because they are not only talking about active transportation but optimization of motorized transportation. Complete Streets would fall nicely in this section of the policy as a strategy around this particular goal. The concept of accessibility and capability was reflected in the policy, too. Ms. Hunkins noted that initially, there was a statement about providing active transportation for day-to-day activities and recreation. That did not sit well with a lot of people, because transportation can be used for whatever purpose someone wants, whether it’s going to get milk, going to the store, for children going to school, for work or to be out for physical activities. Line 35 of the policy represents a broader goal for the department now that it has been modified.

Ms. Szlosberg-Landis asked to have line 35 of the policy modified to read “access to and options for customers of all abilities and capabilities”. The Committee agreed with Ms. Szlosberg-Landis’ suggestion.

Ms. Hunkins moved on to explain lines 40 and 41 of the policy goal of “exposure”. The Policy was modified to reflect previous conversations on this subject with the Board.

Some people that reviewed the policy were very appreciative that the implementation section was not scripted in terms of what this means, what they need and have to do, and what could be done; this allows a lot of flexibility to adapt to research and demographics, different programs and initiatives, and priorities that come up over time. On the other hand, because it is not prescriptive, some people have read the policy and thought it sounded great but wanted to know what it meant for them in their day-to-day business operations and what might they need to do differently.

Ms. Hunkins suggested that if the Board does approve the policy as a next step that they begin having conversations among the departmental divisions and units and have a dialogue about what is in the policy and what it could mean for them. The Accountability Framework and the

Healthy Communities Principles, as well as the “Improve Public Health Outcomes” Objective should be discussed. Conversations should be had about what the opportunities are and to think about the processes and services, what makes sense and conversations in terms of their performance metrics and the dashboard and integrating it all together and allowing them to shape everything together in a meaningful way.

Another item came up in terms of implementation around active transportation and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. One group brought up the fact that some may believe in terms of the draft policy’s physical activity goal that it’s going to be highly related to the ability to obtain funding for the active modes of transportation. This comes to how we fund sidewalks and the associated cost sharing. This also has to do with project schedules.

Often times when projects come into project development they do not include the bicycle and pedestrian desires and needs of a community in the programming of the project. Modifying the project at the last minute to have them included is an interruption on the whole system. The need to talk about the health outcomes, and related active transportation infrastructure emphasized; ideally, it would be integrated early through long-range transportation systems planning and through the prioritization process, and then into project development. The message that was encouraged to be delivered to the Board was that funding for the active modes of transportation for bicycle and pedestrian is going to be important. The community goals and what the community wants in terms of improving their health outcomes through increased physical activity needs, needs to be up front in the long range planning through the community’s identification of their goals; that would get carried through the through the project prioritization process, and on into project development (not at the last minute).

Ms. Proffitt shared a personal experience of trying to add sidewalks on to a project under construction. It is not an easy task and it should have been done before construction. The sidewalks will be completed, and it is not an easy thing to do after the fact.

Ms. Szlosberg-Landis added that hopefully some of the implementation of Complete Streets will help.

Mr. Bennett suggested getting the message out up front so that it doesn’t get lost in the transition. It is a realistic part is the transportation process and not an add-on expense. It is all about adding value to the system.

Ms. Szlosberg-Landis stated that since she has been on the Board, there has been a great awareness about this. She stated that everyone on Board has agreed that they need to increase spending. She asked if that cost would be imbedded in the TIP cost or does it come out of a bicycle and pedestrian budget?

Mr. Bennett commented that it does not come out of a Bicycle and Pedestrian budget. They have to get it in the footprint of the project and then add the TIP funding sources. When the money starts separating, that is when you have to start talking about other funding sources and deciding what’s available and other decisions to be considered.

Ms. Blackburn commented on the stand alone projects, primarily in the already build-out areas where it's not about re-defining the street type itself; it is about putting in sidewalks where they weren't before. There will always be an on-going need for stand-alone funding.

Ms. Szlosberg-Landis commented that Ralph and Tim are communicating and moving towards some kind of motion to increase the funding.

Mr. Bennett asked, "Do you think projects with a long history have a specific purpose and need that can't be deviated from?" It is the hand-cuff system. We don't want to start the environmental process or open environmental process on some projects. They are taking a risk in doing that.

Ms. Szlosberg-Landis commented that given the resource agencies on-going interests, this has been their problem all along - which is not negotiating a deal.

Ms. Hunkins asked if the Board wanted anymore modification to the policy and if they accept the changes before them in the policy. She asked if there were any items of concern to be addressed.

Mr. Watts commented that he appreciated the effort and likes the fact that there is encouragement by everyone. A lot of times, people want you to define what it is you have to do.

Ms. Szlosberg-Landis remembered when the department's Environmental Stewardship Policy was passed about a decade ago, many employees printed it and posted the policy at their work stations. She felt that if they could get the policy to everyone that it might help ease everyone consciousness.

Ms. Hunkins commented that in order to do what Ms. Szlosberg-Landis suggested, they would need an official approval by the Board. In terms of next steps, DENR, Commerce and DHHS stated that when the time comes, they would be happy to submit it to their Secretaries and consider getting some kind of endorsement, if the EPPC desired. There will need to be some kind of action from the EPPC Committee to get this up to the full Board for a presentation and possible approval in October. The changes discussed today will be made and reflected in the presentation to the Board.

After some discussion, Ms. Nina Szlosberg-Landis adjourned the joint meeting at 2:00 P.M.

JH/ajp